

ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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1. **Press conference at Farm Progress Show will highlight statewide aerial photo project**
2. **DNR to feature services and geographic information capabilities at Farm Progress Show**
3. **Deadline for Iowa environmental awards just one week away**
4. **Federal grant to provide training water operators**
5. **Volunteers to be recognized at annual conference**

PRESS CONFERENCE AT FARM PROGRESS SHOW WILL HIGHLIGHT STATE-WIDE AERIAL PHOTO PROJECT

DES MOINES — A press conference highlighting a project to provide highly detailed aerial photographs of the state will be held at 2 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 24 , at the Farm Progress Show near Alleman. The press conference will take place at the DNR tent which is part of Conservation Central located at lot 32 West in the southwest part of “tent city” at the Farm Progress Show.

Aerial photos have been used extensively in agriculture, business and government. This series of photos will be some of the best ever available in Iowa and are expected to have wide spread usage.

The aerial photos have a wide variety of applications such as improving farm management decisions, water quality, planning and zoning and emergency management. The project has included taking more than 4,000 highly detailed aerial photos of the state. By using infrared technology, vegetation types can be detected. The technology will allow users to differentiate between a hay field, pasture, native prairie, lawns and crop types, an important tool to people managing natural resources and developing strategies to prevent pollution.

“By having detailed information of vegetation and erosion control structures available, we make accurate estimations of how much soil is entering our streams and lakes after a rainfall. Detailed information like this allows us to not only develop more effective strategies to address pollution, but also makes us much more efficient from a fiscal

standpoint because we can target our efforts and resources where we can do the most good,” according to Lyle Asell of the DNR.

Asell said the photographs will also have a wide variety of other applications including providing emergency services through E-911, locating utilities and planning road projects.

“That’s why this wasn’t just a DNR project. There are more than 30 partners involved including federal, state and local government agencies, private businesses and non-profit organizations,” said Asell.

Several of the organizations involved in the project will be on hand at the press conference to discuss different applications for photographs produced.

Examples of the technology will be on display at the DNR tent at the Farm Progress Show. The information will also eventually be available on the Internet.

For more information, contact Kevin Baskins (515) 281-8395.

DNR TO FEATURE SERVICES AND GEOGRAPHIC CAPABILITIES AT FARM PROGRESS SHOW

DES MOINES — DNR will highlight managing private lands for environmental quality at the Farm Progress Show Sept. 24 to 26.

GIS (Geographic Information System) maps and specialists will showcase Iowa’s natural resources and how new technologies can be used for watershed planning.

DNR fisheries and wildlife biologists, foresters and mapping specialists can answer farmers’ questions about how to put conservation on the land, including how to add wildlife habitat, water quality buffers or other conservation practices.

Many of those practices are showcased on a model farm located in the area of Conservation Central, a one-stop shop of 12 conservation groups.

DNR and other conservation specialists are in the southwest part of the show grounds on lots 30 to 32W on West Avenue.

For more information, contact Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395.

DEADLINE FOR IOWA ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS JUST ONE WEEK AWAY

DES MOINES — Iowans have one week left to apply for the 2002 Iowa Environmental Excellence Awards. Recognizing leadership and innovation, the awards are the premier environmental honors in Iowa.

The application deadline is Sept. 27.

“This is an opportunity for businesses, organizations and communities to be honored for all they do to enhance Iowa’s natural resources,” said Jeff Vonk, DNR director. “We encourage every Iowan to take an active role in their environment, and this awards program recognizes their successes.”

Awards will be given for overall environmental stewardship, along with special project awards in air quality, water quality, waste management, habitat development and energy efficiency/renewable energy.

Innovative, result-oriented strategies include: creating new technologies or processes that improve the environment; developing natural resource protection and enhancement projects, such as watershed protection; establishing educational or prevention programs that result in environmental improvements; creating programs or processes that balance economics with the environment; and much more.

The awards are sponsored by the Governor’s Office, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Iowa Department of Public Health, the Iowa Department of Economic Development, the Iowa Department of Education, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and the Iowa Waste Reduction Center.

To obtain an application, contact: Bob Castelline, Department of Natural Resources, e-mail: Bob.Castelline@dnr.state.ia.us; (515) 281-0879, or go to the Web site: www.state.ia.us/dnr.

FEDERAL GRANT TO PROVIDE TRAINING FOR WATER OPERATORS

DES MOINES — A federal grant will be used to certify and train water operators for systems serving drinking water to hundreds of thousands of Iowans.

The \$2.48 million grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will help defray the costs of a new requirement that all public water supplies have a certified operator in charge. The money will be used to cover initial training and certification expenses for operators during the next six years.

The new requirements impact systems serving as few as 25 people a day for as few as four hours a day, four days a week. Most of the systems coming into the new regulations are smaller systems including small cities, mobile home parks, schools, churches, daycare facilities and businesses such as restaurants, gas stations, factories and parks having their own water supplies.

A total of 1,171 additional water supplies will need certified operators under the new requirements. All together, these systems serve more than 650,000 people.

Water systems serving more than 3,300 people have been required to have a certified water operator.

The DNR is currently seeking requests for proposals to determine the type of projects that will be funded under the grant.

For more information, contact Dennis Alt at (515) 725-0275.

VOLUNTEERS TO BE RECOGNIZED AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

DES MOINES — Volunteers from across the state will be recognized for their contributions to Iowa's environment at the Second Annual Volunteers in Natural Resources Conference, scheduled for November 22-23, at the Airport Holiday Inn in Des Moines, Iowa.

The event is sponsored by the IOWATER volunteer water quality monitoring program and the DNR's Keepers of the Land program. Workshop topics include:

- Wildlife diversity programs
- IOWATER volunteer data
- "Snapshot" sampling of Iowa's waterways, and
- A hands-on session on getting your own prairie, forest or wetland project started

"The DNR depends on volunteers. They help clean and build trails, beautify our parks, test our waters, and act as hosts at our campgrounds," said Jeffrey Vonk, Director of the DNR. "We need to thank them for all that they do."

Volunteers from both the IOWATER and Keepers of the Land programs will be acknowledged for their service to Iowa's natural resources through a special awards banquet and ceremony. Nationally recognized volunteer, Chad Pegracke of the Mississippi River Beautification and Restoration Project, will be the featured speaker on Friday evening. Mr. Pegracke will also conduct a workshop on Saturday. Visit his project's Web site at www.cleanrivers.com.

Registration for the event is \$25 and is due by Friday, November 8. To learn more about IOWATER or Keepers of the Land, visit their respective Web sites at www.iowater.net or www.keepersoftheland.org. To register for the conference, visit the DNR Web site at www.state.ia.us/dnr and click on the conference link.

For more information, contact Stefanie Forret at (515) 281-3150 or stefanie.forret@dnr.state.ia.us.